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FROM FARMING TO FLORISTICS: WILLIAM C. MARTIN (1923 – 2010)

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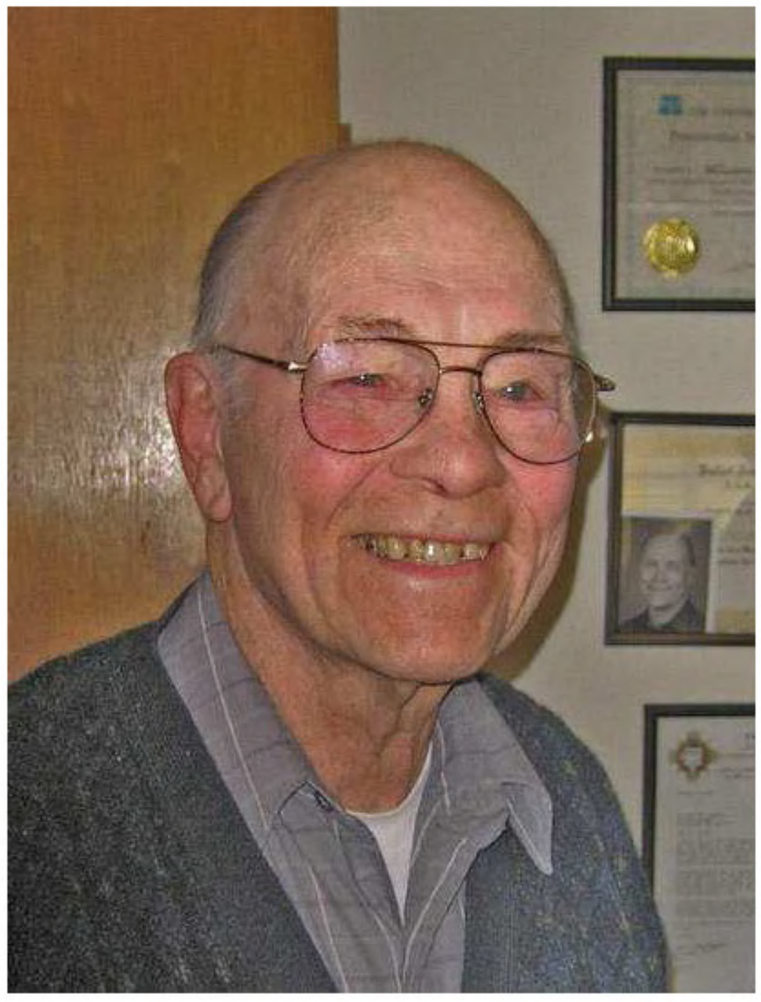
Call it destiny, or serendipity, that soft force which propels a person from universally uncertain beginnings to a life's work. It is mostly uncontemplated, at best ill-defined. Yet somehow the gathering of experiences creates some sense of purpose and direction. Sometimes it takes a man from the simplest agrarian background to a formal career in science. So it was with Bill Martin, University of New Mexico professor and author.



William Clarence Martin was born on November 27, 1923 in Dayton, Kentucky, a small town across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. A brother, Eugene, was born on October 14, 1925. Their father, William Clarence Martin Sr., worked in an office supply company spray-painting office furniture. In 1927 the family moved to Ripley County in southeastern Indiana to build a new life on a farm of 100 acres about a mile south of Delaware, Indiana. "Ours was a fairly typical farm, with horses, mules, beef cattle, milk cows, hogs, and chickens. Dad raised all manner of vegetables, plus corn, soybeans, hay, oats, buckwheat and tobacco." Bill and his brother had numerous farm chores, from milking the cows to picking hornworms from the tobacco plants.

A common view in the agricultural Midwest in this era was to get education out of the way before boys grew big enough and strong enough to be of real use on the farm. His mother, Alline Ormes Martin was instrumental in his early education. "I started school a few months before I turned five, but I was at least somewhat prepared for school work, because Mom had taught me to read in our McGuffey Eclectic Reader when I was barely four." His first school was a one room rural "little red schoolhouse," made of brick, called Union School, complete with inkwells in the right hand corner of the desks. The restrooms were outside, side by side. Bill spent five years at Union School. In 1933 the family moved to a much smaller farm near Delaware. Bill entered the Delaware Grade School which contained grades one through eight. This school was considerably more formal than the Union School. He remained there until a Ripley County consolidated high school was completed in 1936 in Napoleon, about 8 miles from Delaware. At this point in his life, Bill showed little interest in science. In fact he was a charter member of Future Farmers of America at his new school. He graduated with twenty others in 1941.

Meanwhile, Bill did his part on the family farm. Life was still quite simple there. "I prepared all my homework by the light of kerosene lamps until I was a junior in high school." In 1937, the Martins relocated to another farm "a couple of miles northeast of Delaware." In 1939, there was another move to a farm complete with a running stream called Castetter Creek, a bit west of Delaware. Bill and his brother delivered newspapers and made extra money at 75 cents a week. After 1939, Bill and his father worked at the Milan Furniture Factory, about 5 miles away. Bill

worked as an apprentice on the molding machine starting out at 20 cents an hour. Even with school, the newspaper route, the furniture factory and the farm, Bill found time to hunt fossils and gather ginseng roots, which sold for $16 per pound.

During his last two years of high school, Bill saved enough money to pay part of his way to attend college. In the fall of 1941 he enrolled at Purdue University with the intention to study horticultural science. Pearl Harbor changed everything. By the fall of 1942 Bill realized that military service was inevitable. Early in 1943 he tried enlisting in the Marines and the Navy, but for both the quotas were full. The army had no quotas and in the late winter of 1943 he was inducted into the U.S. Army at Ft. Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis. Two weeks later he was sent to Camp Swift near Austin, Texas for basic training. He was assigned to the 389th Field Artillery Battalion in the 97th Infantry Division. After basic training his unit moved on to field maneuvers in "the piney woods and swamps of Louisiana." Shortly thereafter he was transferred to the Army Specialists Training Program for engineering training at Louisiana State University and then to the College of Mines and Metallurgy (now UTEP) in El Paso, Texas. By the summer of 1944 the army decided it wouldn't continue the ASTP program and Bill rejoined his old unit in Ft. Leonard Wood in Missouri. Bill signed up to become a paratrooper, but was picked to go to aerial defense machine gun school in South Carolina. After returning to Missouri the army gave Bill his first taste of teaching. "So the army people assigned me to the instructor's hand to hand combat school…After training, my assignment was to instruct our unit, a class of about 175 — guys all bigger than me — to the finer points of hand to hand combat, including knife fighting. I guess I had learned the techniques sufficiently, because I had to show a lot of big guys that a little fellow like me could defend himself." Anyone who knew Bill would find this unimaginable.

Bill's unit was ordered to Camp San Luis Obispo, California for amphibious warfare training in preparation for duty in the South Pacific. The men took initial training there and then were sent to other camps in southern California to be trained in the use of landing craft. After training had been completed, the army decided the unit was needed in the European theater. In February 1945 they reached the east coast and two days later left on the 12 day Liberty Ship journey to Europe, arriving at Le Havre, France in early March. The 97th moved north through Belgium and entered Germany near Aachen. They tasted their first action on the west bank of the Rhine River. "It was there, after the German shells began dropping in, I became one of the fastest foxhole diggers anyone has ever seen." Bill's duty initially was as a .50 caliber machine gunner and an anti-tank gunner. Later he was assigned to the laying and repairing of battlefield phone lines. "That meant that we might have to crawl along in mud or snow toward an observation post, in pitch darkness, with a telephone line in one had and a rifle in the other, all the time looking for a break in the line. Often German and American machine gun fire and mortar bursts were too close for comfort." Bill also helped to detect and clear land mines. The 97th had become part of Patton's 3rd Army and took part in the Battle for the Ruhr Pocket which resulted in the surrender of thousands of German soldiers. "During that action, we fired night and day, three howitzer rounds per minute." As spring advanced, the army swiftly moved across Germany and into Czechoslovakia. By mid-May the shooting was over in Europe.

Bill's unit returned to the United States and the men were given 30 days furlough with the understanding that they would reassemble and participate in the invasion of Japan. The men reported to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina for additional training. They then boarded a train for a seven-day trip to Ft. Lawton near Seattle where the 97th was assembling. However almost every man in Bill's battalion – the 389th – came down with amoebic dysentery and the 97th left without them. The 389th was broken up and given stateside duty. Bill was discharged from the army on Valentine's Day, 1946. He had lost one uncle in combat, and another uncle and his brother were seriously wounded.

Bill's last duty station was at Camp Atterbury about 20 miles south of Indianapolis, Indiana. After he left the army he was only about 50 miles from Middletown in Henry County, where his parents were living. He stayed with them for a time and then decided to hitchhike to see his brother at Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. His brother, Eugene was still in the army after being wounded in Europe. After returning to Middletown, he took a trip back to his old haunts in Ripley County to visit old friends and families. He made a special point of seeing a girl named Evelyn Hastings who had lived on a farm sharing a fence with the Martin farm when Bill was in high school. He even went to Easter Sunday services at her church on April 21. By the end of spring, Bill had made the decision to return to Purdue in the fall.

By September, he was back in West Lafayette enrolled in the Division of Forestry of the School of Agriculture of Purdue University. He soon switched to the Department of Horticulture. After rooming with relatives for a while, he bought an old house in Lafayette, where he and a few other students lived. On June 14, 1947 he and Evelyn Hastings were married. The newlyweds continued to live in Bill's house with four others. Bill and Evelyn both worked at Sears to provide income. Their first child, William David, was born in 1949. Bill graduated in 1950 with a degree in horticultural science.

Bill landed a job with Smith Nursery in Muncie, Indiana. They sold their house in Lafayette and bought another in Middletown, about 12 miles from Muncie. Bill worked at the nursery for about a year and then got into managing apple orchards. It wasn't the most lucrative of occupations so he went to work for General Motors in a plant that produced automobile lighting equipment. He then joined the Allison Aircraft Engine division in Indianapolis. The long drive to Indianapolis became wearisome and he went to work at the Kaiser-Willis Company in Anderson, Indiana, which manufactured gears for jet engines and automatic transmissions. The plant closed its operations in 1954. Bill needed to make another change. "For a long time, I had wanted to embark on a career in biological science and this seemed to be a perfect time to make a clean break with automobile and aircraft production. So I applied to the Indiana University Graduate School for advanced studies in botanical sciences."

So at age 30 Bill, with Evelyn and by this time their three children David (William), James and Barbara, moved to Bloomington, Indiana. Bill held a teaching assistanceship and Evelyn worked full time at a dry cleaning establishment. "Those were really busy years for both of us, early morning to midnight everyday." Since his interest was taxonomic botany, he studied under Dr, Charles Heiser, a renowned sunflower specialist. Bill also served as curatorial assistant at the herbarium. As part of his research, he made numerous field forays all over the south-central and southeastern states collecting sunflowers. He completed his Masters in 1956 and his Ph.D. in 1958, with his dissertation on the Biosystematics of *Helianthus angustifolius* and Related Species.

Bill sent out applications for employment to several schools. He decided to accept a position at the University of New Mexico. He had been through the area on troop trains during the war. The west was new and different, a treasure trove for a botanist with a passion for floristics. "It was a change. I don't think that Evelyn was particularly thrilled when we came through the canyon. She was a little shocked I'm sure, but after we'd been here a year or so we had no wish to return to the east anymore." Bill quickly became immersed in teaching as well as learning about the geography and the plants of New Mexico. He got to know the faculty. One member, at that time the longest serving member of the Biology Department in the school's history, Dean of the Graduate School, and Vice President of the University, was Dr. Edward Castetter, a curious reminder to Bill of his youth along Castetter Creek in Ripley County.

In 1961, Castetter retired from his extensive administrative responsibilities at the University. Bill worked with Castetter a great deal. He often assisted with proofreading. The two produced *A Checklist of Angiosperms and Gymnosperms of New Mexico* in 1970. After retiring, Castetter still had two major projects he wished to complete: a complete treatment of the cacti of New Mexico and the preparation of a new flora of the state. He decided to devote his time to the study of cacti and suggested that Bill undertake the project of writing a new flora of New Mexico. Bill involved his graduate students in gathering floristic data and used his summers to explore the state (and the southwest in general) for plants. In the summer of 1965 Bill, with Loren Potter from UNM, Dale Smith from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Neil Osborne from the University of Southern Colorado operated a summer field botany institute for advanced graduate students at UNM's D.H. Lawrence Ranch near Taos, New Mexico. In 1967, Bill and Dale Smith spent the summer studying alpine phlox in the central and southern Rocky Mountains. In 1968 a man by the name of Charles R. "Bob" Hutchins, whom Bill had gotten to know through the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), moved to Albuquerque to pursue an advanced degree under Bill. Bob rapidly became absorbed in the flora project, and though he did not choose to complete his studies, became Bill's close friend and dedicated himself to the project for the next twelve years. It is hard to conceive of the difficulty of this undertaking. There were no computer databases. Everything was done with paper, pencil, typewriter, and file folders.

Bill served as Assistant Professor of Biology from 1958-1965, Associate Professor of Biology from 1965-1971, and Professor of Biology from 1971-1989, as well as Curator of the Herbarium from 1958-1989. During a leave of absence from UNM he served as Senior Curator of Botany at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History from 1970-1972. At the same time he was Adjunct Professor of Biology at the University of Southern California. He remained a Research Associate at the Museum of Natural History for the remainder of his career.

After returning to UNM in 1972, Bill worked on a diversity of projects, numerous botanical surveys, the chemotaxonomy of *Ribes*, the chemotaxonomy of *Astragalus* and *Oxytropis,* natural succession on strip-mined land, and germination requirements of plants of arid lands. Of course, considerable energy went into the effort to finish the flora of New Mexico project. By the late 1970's most of the research was as complete as possible for a continuously evolving topic. Bill began assembling the massive document. "The typing was awfully time consuming. I'd come home to supper and go back to work and type a while."

The prospect of finding a publisher was daunting. Bill tried to involve UNM Press, but the task was too large and the audience too small to pique their interest. Undaunted, Bill typed on, while Bob Hutchins prepared range maps. Clayton Hoff, a parasitologist in the department would get together with Bill every morning to proofread. Somehow, by some route unknown to Bill, J. Cramer, a German publisher, heard about the project and contacted Bill. Bill, Bob, and everyone associated with the flora were ecstatic. For the next year and a half sections of the flora were mailed to Germany by "Santa Fe Bill," as he was affectionately known at J. Cramer. There was no email. There were no word processors. "That was a challenge. Sent it in sections, usually a hundred or two hundred pages at a time. But there were 2600 pages all together. Took a lot of mailing back and forth, a lot of postage." The *Flora of New Mexico*, in two volumes, appeared in 1980-81. Bill and Bob agreed that their final product was not all they had wished it to be. There were omissions and errors, but after so many years, there simply wasn't the energy to pursue the project further.

Over the years, Bill taught 19 different classes. He came to be known among his students as "P.C.," plant chief. He advised more than 60 graduate students involved with monographic studies of *Castilleja, Senecio*, and *Cirsium,* and floristic studies of the Jemez Mountains, Redondo Peak, Mt. Taylor, the Manzano Mountains, Wheeler Peak, the San Andres Mountains, the Animas Mountains,

the Ladron Peak/Sevilleta area, the Datil Mountains, and the Grants lava beds. During the 1980's, Bill continued his association with Bob Hutchins, publishing three books in conjunction with Robert DeWitt Ivey: *Spring Wildflowers of New Mexico* (1984), *Summer Wildflowers of New Mexico* (1986), and *Fall Wildflowers of New Mexico* (1988). Also, in this decade, Bill and Loren Potter put together a summer course for graduate students to study and collect plants in the western U.S. The group logged more than 5000 miles in eight states. Bill also continued his connection with the Los Angeles County Museum, making several visits to the Hawaiian Islands to study rare and endangered plants. These forays were to backcountry areas to the islands of Hawaii, Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and Molokai. Bill noted" We were able to locate some plants that had not been seen for 50 years or more." While there, he was able to reconnect with an ex-student who earned a Masters at UNM, Warren L. Wagner, then Associate Botanist at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

Late in his career he and Evelyn purchased 31 acres of ponderosa forest land in Grant County, a few miles north of Silver City. "Early in our marriage, I promised Evelyn a 'cabin in the woods.' Now that we had the woods, it seemed logical that we should have the cabin." Bill retired from the University in 1989. Soon thereafter Bill and Evelyn designed an 860 square foot cabin. Construction, plumbing, and wiring were effected by the family. Bill, Evelyn, son Dave and daughter-in-law Dottie, daughter Barbie and son-in-law Dan, and son Jim all worked on it, mostly with the use of hand tools. Away from academia, Bill remained active. For a number of years he served on the botanic garden advisory committee, which gave rise to the Rio Grande Botanic Garden. He also served on the La Semilla Advisory Council for the New Mexico State Land Commissioner, Dr. Ray Powell. Bill gave numerous lectures about wildflowers and many other subjects to various community groups. The Martins became very interested in their family histories and began serious genealogical research, including trips to Canada and London.

The twilight of any career is necessarily bittersweet. Bill's retirement was probably longer than many – more than 20 years. He was as active as he could be, but time passed. He retained an essential joy in what he had contributed, particularly to those he had sought to educate and motivate in his many years of teaching. Indeed, his graduate students have contributed much. Warren L. Wagner became curator of the National Herbarium at the Smithsonian Institution and world expert in the family Onagraceae (evening primrose) as well as President of the American Society of Plant Taxonomists. Ray Powell served two terms as Land Commissioner of New Mexico and is now Director of the Jane Goodall Institute's Root and Shoot Program. Reggie Fletcher spent a distinguished career with the U.S. Forest Service. Paul Knight spent 12 years as botanist for the New Mexico Natural Heritage Program. There are many others. In his last decade he was honored with the naming of *Cirsium ochrocentrum* var. *martinii*. Although he would never have really supported the naming of a plant for himself, there is little doubt that he was touched by the gesture of UNM Ph.D. candidate Patricia Barlow-Irick.

Bill died quietly in his sleep on January 18, 2010.